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Lichtenberg donates 40 acres to land trust

A retired Dodge County official has donated 40 acres of land to the Land Trust Network based in Jefferson County.

The Land Trust Network was the recipient of a donation of a conservation easement from retired Dodge County Administrative Secretary Garland Lichtenberg. Lichtenberg, who resides north of Waupun, served as the Dodge County administrative secretary for 26 years, retiring in December 2008 after 40 years of service with the county.

He began his career with Dodge County in 1968 when he served as the zoning administrator.

Lichtenberg's 40-acre farm, located on the north side of the city of Waupun, has been in his family for generations. The farm includes woodlands, farmland and a pond, according to Martine Koeppel, chairwoman of the Land Trust Network.

Lichtenberg's property will serve as a buffer zone between residential development south of the property and farmland north of the property.

A conservation easement restricts the land from being developed into residential, commercial and industrial development and protects the land's surface from being altered.

Through a conservation easement landowners can dictate how their land is used in the future, a tool often used with estate planning.

By placing a conservation easement on the land, Lichtenberg has virtually stopped urban sprawl from continuing on the north side of Waupun, Koeppel said. His intentions were very clear in stopping the urban growth, she added.

Federal and state tax rules allow for a tax deduction for a conservation easement donation. The value of the easement and its income tax donation value is the difference between the value the property has if developed and the property's value if sold as farmland, Koeppel said.

Under recent tax regulations approved by Congress, enhanced tax deductions are allowed through December 2011 for any conservation easement donated during the years of 2010-2011.

The Land Trust Network of Jefferson County is a tax-exempt organization that can accept the donation of land and easements, and can purchase land and easements using government funds and individual donations.

Conservation easements given to the Land Trust Network are held in a public trust in perpetuity. To date, the Land Trust Network has received 17 donated easements, permanently protecting more than 2,000 acres of land from development in six Wisconsin Counties, including Fond du Lac County where the Lichtenberg property is located.

Information on programs offered by the Land Trust Network can be found at landtrustnetwork.org or write to LTN, P.O. Box 142, Watertown.